

Salisbury Cathedral Close Preservation Society

"Rus In Urbe"

Chairman: Sir Robin Ibbs K.B.E.
Secretary: Mrs Alison Pinkerton O.B.E.

August 2005

Summer Bulletin – Chairman's Letter to Members

Dear Member

As in other recent years, this Summer Bulletin takes the form of the provisional minutes of the AGM held earlier this year, together with this covering letter to sum up events that have involved your Committee since that meeting.

Death of Sir Edward Heath K.G. M.B.E.

It is with sadness that we record the death last month of our patron Sir Edward Heath. His steadfast encouragement of the work of the Society will be sorely missed.

Conservation Plan for the Cathedral and Close

The most crucial matter has continued to be the Conservation Plan which is being prepared for the Chapter by the consultants Alan Baxter & Associates. The first phase of the Plan has provided a record in great detail (several volumes) of what there is to conserve, and the significance of each item in conservation terms. It concludes with a statement of policies to be followed. The consultants are now working on the next phase which is known as the Management Plan or Master Plan. This will specify, based on the extensive information collected in the first phase, how conservation objectives could be achieved in practice, and will establish priorities to indicate the order in which projects should be tackled. The Society has been pleased to be included in the consultation programme for this latest phase. Three members of the Society's committee have had a two hour meeting with Mr Robert Thorne, senior consultant, which covered a wide range of issues of interest to the Society.

The most important issue for the Society is that the totality of the Cathedral, the Close and the wider surroundings should be judged as a whole, and recognised as being unique, world class and without equal. This point has been made forcibly to Mr Thorne, and we have asked that a clear statement of the exceptional merit of the totality should be included in the Master Plan. It is important that a declaration of this kind should be made now so that in decades, or even centuries ahead, the totality may always be deemed worthy of preservation, and that the pieces that contribute to the overall effect may be similarly valued, whatever planning and political circumstances prevail. We also believe that establishing the value of the totality on 'heritage' grounds is important.

A wide range of specific items of concern to the Society was discussed with Mr Thorne, these included:-

- Preserving the buildings, firstly the Cathedral but also the other buildings in the Close; account should be taken of the possible effect of 'climate change'; moves from leasehold to freehold ownership should not be allowed to reduce standards of maintenance or appearance.
- Preserving the quality of the space in the Close, including neat grass, roads and pathways, minimal signage, appropriate lighting and tidy well cultivated gardens.
- Preserving the contribution to the landscape made by the trees and hedges.
- Making the most of significant features, such as the Broad Walk.
- Avoiding the Close becoming a permanent sculpture park.
- Avoiding the commercialisation of the Close with an increasing number of obvious offices; buildings in the Close should be residential or educational.

- Avoiding additional buildings; when they are unavoidable they should be attractive and unobtrusive (as had been achieved by Leaden Hall School) and well away from the Cathedral.
- Making good sensitive use of existing buildings, a notable opportunity being the vacant Cloisters.
- Resolving the future location of the Works Department; there is probably a case for a small basic facility in a neat unobtrusive building somewhere in the Close, but any major 'dump' for stone and equipment should be elsewhere; there is a need to provide a better view of the south face of the Cathedral.
- The need to reduce traffic in the Close; elimination of through traffic and parking. (The Society believes that the southern car park has reduced parking elsewhere in the Close, and it should be retained).
- Not to have a new entrance at the southern end of the Close. (If a new entrance were to become unavoidable, it should be through the grounds of the Cathedral School but even that would be very undesirable).
- In considering the surroundings of the Close, the importance of continuing not to allow any tall buildings in the City, nor any 'heavy' buildings immediately adjacent to the Close; it is also important to preserve the Harnham Water Meadows.
- The importance of security, including the possibility of CCTV in the Close.

World Heritage Status

The Society has submitted to the Dean a paper on the possibility of applying for World Heritage status for the Cathedral and Close. As a result, enquiries are being made about the experiences of places which have been granted this status. It is important in assessing the value of this status that the potential significance in the long term, rather than just any immediate benefits, should be kept in mind.

The Broad Walk

A scheme for improving the appearance of the Broad Walk which the Society would have been willing to support, has been turned down by the Chapter on the grounds that other plans being considered could affect the Broad Walk, and it would therefore be wrong to spend money on it at this stage.

Annual Lecture

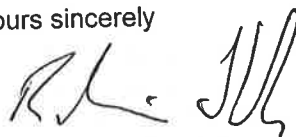
The Society's Annual Lecture will be given on Monday 24th October 2005 in the Museum lecture Theatre at 6.30pm. Mr Tim Tatton Brown will be speaking on 'Water in the Close'. This promises to be another interesting lecture and will cover matters such as drainage, flooding and other aspects of water management. Members are advised to obtain their tickets in good time as numbers permitted in the Lecture Theatre are limited. Tickets can be obtained from Mrs A Pinkerton, 1 De Vaux Place, Salisbury SP1 2SJ at a cost of £5.00 each, an application slip is enclosed.

Membership Subscriptions

Members who do not pay their subscriptions by standing order are reminded that annual subscriptions are now due. A form is enclosed. The support which members give in this way is much appreciated by the Committee.

One final point, it is obvious that the Management Plan currently being worked on by the consultants may have a major influence on the future of the Close. I would welcome suggestions from members of the Society about any additional points we should consider making at this stage.

Yours sincerely



Sir Robin Ibbs